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We join The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition ([EWIC](#)) in congratulating President Bush on re-igniting the White House's involvement in the immigration reform debate and on the initiatives to engage in further discussions with Mexico's President Vicente Fox. These discussions offer an important opportunity to address critical questions of immigration policy. The [President's immigration outline](#) is a welcome first step back into the immigration policy arena.

According to the White House the plan is outlined as follows:

- The program will allow those already employed in the U.S. or anyone abroad to apply for the right to work legally in the country for a three-year renewable term. There is no information on how long the term could be extended or how many times it may be renewed.
- An applicant for the program already in the U.S. must pay an unspecified registration fee and show that he or she is currently employed. Applicants still in their home countries will not have to pay fees, but must have sponsoring employers.

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- Employers must show that no Americans wanted the jobs being applied for and offered to the applicant.
- Temporary workers would get the same protections afforded American workers.
- The worker must return to his or her home country at the end of the term and there will be incentives for them to do so including access to retirement benefits and new tax savings accounts.
- The workers would be allowed to move freely back and forth between the United States and their home countries.
- Congress would have to write legislation for the proposed changes to take effect.

"Immigration is a very difficult issue and a lot of work remains to be done to ensure the final product is workable, but the President's outline will allow us to begin that work in earnest," said Laura Reiff, Greenberg Traurig's Business Immigration National Practice chair and co-chair of EWIC.

"Some might say this proposal won't do the job, but we believe that is a reason to roll up our sleeves and get to work, not walk away from the table," said John Gay, co-chair of EWIC.

Immigration attorneys at Greenberg Traurig will be working with Congressional leaders in the upcoming months to assist in shaping the new immigration policy and refining existing laws to remove existing barriers that would make the new proposal impossible to implement and achieve its intended goals. As co-chair of the EWIC coalition, Ms. Reiff will also be leading the way to define the logistics of the program including but certainly not limited to the number of visas allocated, the definition of a qualifying position, the number of times renewals will be allowed, and the general administration of the program itself.

Although this proposal does not include a legalization component we are very excited that the guest work plan does recognize the shortages that American businesses are facing in locating essential workers and allows for those working in the shadows to legitimize their status in the U.S.

Finally it is important to note, NOTHING is available now. We have received numerous telephone calls from prospective clients wishing to sponsor their employees. Congress first must draft, agree and pass legislation. This may take a good deal of time as support will need to come from both sides of the aisle.

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Finally, the *GT Business Immigration Observer* serves as an invaluable resource to individuals, human resource managers, recruiters, and company executives who must keep current on these matters.

SPREAD THE WORD

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JANUARY 2004 RESOURCES

January 2004 State Department Visa Bulletin Link: http://travel.state.gov/visa_bulletin.html
Service Center Processing Times
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